

## **School Time or Learning Time? José Luiz's lessons**

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**ABSTRACT – School's Time or Learning Time? José Luiz's lessons.** This article reflects about the school's time in the context of the contemporaneous society, which requires of their citizens continuous processes of learning. This study is made from the experiences of José Luiz da Silva, who became a reader and writer of his own text deprived of school K-12. I follow the lines which constituted the collaborator's learning, mainly his processes of reading and *school* experiences, based on the premises of (auto)biographical education research and Oral History, supported on the interwoven networks concept. I reflect about how school has been organized as a privileged space for teaching and learning, evidencing that the school's time should not be limited to a specific stage of human life.

**Keywords: Schools Time. Anonymous Protagonist. Learning. Readings. Youth, Adult and Aged Education.**

**RESUMO – Tempo de Escola ou Tempo de Aprender? lições de José Luiz.** O artigo reflete sobre o tempo da escola no contexto da sociedade contemporânea, que exige processos contínuos de aprendizagens. O estudo faz-se a partir das vivências de José Luiz da Silva, que se tornou leitor e escritor de seu próprio texto sem frequentar educação básica escolar. Com base nos pressupostos da pesquisa (auto)biográfica em educação e da História Oral, apoiado no conceito de redes de tessituras, persigo os fios que constituíram as aprendizagens do colaborador, sobretudo seus processos de leituras e experiências *escolares*. Reflexiono sobre a forma que a escola vem sendo estruturada como espaço privilegiado de ensino-aprendizagem, mostrando que o tempo escola não deve limitar-se a uma fase específica da vida humana.

**Palavras-chave: Tempo da Escola. Protagonista Anônimo. Aprendizagens. Educação de Jovens, Adultos e Idosos.**

The theme *school time* leads us to many questions. Is there a right time to be in school? We live in a period when learning is unachievable in its entirety, since the production and multiplication of knowledge have become much greater with science and technology's development, requiring constant adaptation of individuals to the knowledge these technologies, even the simplest, claim. How to delimit a time for school in the citizens' lives? Should we continue conditioning to school the limit of the K-12 education supply in the context of the contemporary world, whose demands impose challenges to individuals and societies? Would the school be the privileged *locus* of knowledge construction or would there be other areas in which they are possibly realized? Among the frequent questions about the quality of education in the country, would there be other learning areas that contribute with greater success for the *knower* formation?

Thinking about the learning that arise out of school and that I was able to see in the students' lives, particularly concerning adult education, and also in people I met in spaces of social interaction, I was able to develop the research that made it possible to study and understand how apprenticeships can be built in networks that are beyond our ability to enumerate and detect them, appearing, above all in social and readings practices - of texts and of world. This is a study case where the protagonist is an anonymous man, José Luiz, who established himself as a reader and a writer of his own texts, despite the fact that he did not attend school to acquire K-12 education.

The research is set in the oral history field, but was related to the *(auto)biographical productions field of research* (Delory-Momberger, 2014). It was based on reports collected through audio recorded and filmed semi-structured interviews, and compared to bibliographies that allowed a greater depth in the historical contexts of education and the emerging Brazilian society in the subject's narratives. The material's transcript held by the interviewer-researcher himself enhanced the *most insignificant details examination* (Ginzburg, 1989). Other sources produced by the collaborator were studied: notebooks, schedules book, cut sheets, read books and their *marginalias*, results of non-school personal written and readings practices.

I also resorted to documents on the educational history of Paraíba and Araruna, as an approximation effort to a temporal and spatial reality, totally exotic to my experience, but without the worry of finding gaps or distortions in the interviewed reports. As a *mnemotechnic* device, I presented to Mr. Silva some pictures taken from websites depicting the period corresponding to the time he lived in Araruna – since I had no images – in order to stimulate numb memories and try to induce him to “[...] think through proper instruments of his time” (Certeau, 1988).

In the article I present part of the participant's story of life to know how he established himself as a reader-writer, despite of the exclusion

processes of which he was victim, including the right to a formal education. To follow the formation path of the subject, I went through the threads connected to the social networks that forged him, especially his readings, which played an important role in this web. I describe how the narratives built during the dialogic meetings enabled an approach to the complexity that involved the construction process of knowledge through social practices, as in the narrative, constructions went seizing the *pass territories*. Despite the lack of *objects-monuments* from the school passages, the memory overflow of an octogenarian allowed the (re)construction of his experiences, revealing aspects of his life story that resemble other adults: the moment during the childhood in which the right to an education is denied, they (re)invent different ways to learn and to participate in the writing culture society.

The considerations raised by the research and the life narratives of this subject have led to inquiries on the sense of *school time* in different perspectives: schooling periods and memories of the *learner's* education path.

### The Co-author Subject

José Luiz da Silva was the person I took as a privileged informant to study the processes of human development and learning through social and school practices. Born in 1929 in Araruna, state of Paraíba, he was abandoned by his father at the age of 12 years old. He migrates to Rio de Janeiro at the age of 22, searching for better conditions of living for him and his family. He is a man with little education due to economic, political, social and cultural problems, common in the region where he was born, reflex of the state's absence in meeting the basic needs of the population, which formed a mass kept from their rights, including the right to a formal education.

However, in his discourse, we can notice a certain erudition that does not match, in theory, with the lack of education of which he was victim in the childhood. Even though he attended for less than a year to private classes when he was about 11 years old, he acquired reading skills and rudimentary writing abilities. The desire for knowledge was so strong that he kept the acquired skill, even with a poor initial training. The *cordel* pamphlets were the written texts that he had for much of his teenage years to develop reading. Formal education came only after he was 39 years old, when he attended a supplementary course to take the grade school certification, in order to guarantee the job, due to the demand of a federal law enacted during the military government – the Law of Guidelines and Bases of National Education (LDB) n. 4024 / 1961 and the Federal Constitution of 1967. So, after six months of course, he was approved. In the company where he worked, he had contact with literature that allowed the development of a self-training. Although the Bible was the biggest inspiration to a more systematic reading, after

the *cordel* literature in his city of origin, José Luiz read what was in his hands, and some of his first readings were not erased from his memory, like the works of Herodotus, through which he had contact with ancient Greek thinkers and *The Pope and the Council*, from Rui Barbosa.

In the research, I focused on the abilities of writing, reading, interpretation and appropriation of the latter, as well as someone's insatiable desire to learn, made out of the formal school environment. This led me to inquire about the social role given to the school institution and about its real possibilities of contribution for the formation of the *learner* and active citizen.

Without attempting to delegitimize the school in its relevance to the contemporary society, I reflect on how this has been historically structured as a privileged institution of teaching-learning and to produce curricula, especially with regard to the youth, adults and elderly education. I consider both experienced processes in social practice and school procedures (Kalman, 2009), since they deal with procedures that don't exclude each other – although in social realities marked by inequalities, not all individuals have access to school learning processes – and since reading and writing are social acts, even when produced by individuals alone.

### **Some Constituent Threads of the Learning Subject**

The old challenges as part of school education are renewed with the new demands of the contemporary world, which imposed changes in ways of thinking about education that cannot be interpreted as limited to the traditional model of teaching and learning in formal school spaces, requiring the recognition that it transposes school walls, and takes place in different and diverse environments that often have showed to be more updated than the educational institution, and this one remains resistant to the own uses that modern technology has invented.

The conception that school is the institution of learning became a myth. More than in any other time, several social spaces perform that function. The present world urges for daily updates, information quickly becomes outdated and transmuted realities require adjustments and theoretical-conceptual innovations to its reflexivity, deciphering approach and ability to handle devices and programs. In this changing context, the word learning seems to be “[...] the key word in the contemporary world and crucial issue on the complexity of the requirements that face the subjects” (Paiva; Sales, 2013, p. 2).

Delory-Momberger (2014) presents a brief history of the education throughout life concept that has dominated the documents produced by international institutions to discuss young, adults and seniors' education. In fact, the notion of education throughout life was already presented in Comenius propositions at the beginning of modernity, stat-

ing that it has predecessors in antiquity. The school, in the conception of the ancient Greeks, was a temporal entity – *scholé* – designating the work done *by itself* and *on itself*, on free time, not an activity engaged for the city. Constituted in time devoted to *care of themselves*, it involved readings, meditations from life circumstances, meeting with friends or taking care of the body and health. Associated not only with youth or a fixed age, it extended throughout life, with particular development in those who were isolated from the city tasks, due to wisdom or higher age. The teaching methodology was based on the practice and without a specific space, and happened in everyday life, when one learned from each other in close interaction, through practical and reflective experiences about life with its mysteries and dilemmas.

According to Delory-Momberger (2014, p. 101-102), the concern of Comenius with education at all ages, present in movements for popular education in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and European proposals for education throughout life inherited the Protestant tradition linked to the culture of personal vocation, which lead each one to work on self improvement and personal fulfillment. Added to that, “[...] considerations of geopolitical nature, related to Europe place in the world” and the role of education in ensuring that position.

In a society that was structured by *cognitive relationship*, i.e., the *position of each one in the space of knowledge and competence*, extended education to all ages, to all occasions and to all forms of knowledge appears as the main instrument of social inclusion, work aptitude and individual development.

For Delory-Momberger (2014), with the formation assuming the ongoing process of character, through life, a new relation is incorporated between the individual with time and the life cycle. It inverts the relations between school and active life, childhood and adulthood, and puts into question the traditional representation of life divided in three different ages (education, occupation, retirement), subverting the *biographical program* of the industrial society, establishing links between age and specific forms of integration in the social fields.

It is undeniable that knowledge is acquired outside the school, in life, in action, with the experience and acquisitions that need to be recognized on training and professional activity. It is known that actions are formative and that experiences produce knowledge. The author takes the issues instigated by Pineau about the complexity of the matters when assuming the possible recognition of the experience acquisitions. The inquiry focuses on “[...] understanding of production conditions of this knowledge and processes that allow its awareness and formalization for social validation purposes”. The experience and knowledge reality is not easy to grasp, since it responds to another logic, “[...] impossible of being shaped in a mechanical way, which remains today widely ignored” (Delory-Momberger, 2014, p. 85-86).

In order the experience acquisitions can be socially recognized it is necessary, according to Delory-Momberger, that the acquired knowledge is first *nominated* by the individuals themselves and find a place in their representation. It is necessary that they constitute a language in the symbolic universe of their life world and their biographical construction. One of the ways of apprehending it is through the textualization of the individual's paths and experiences made, through actions that require a reflective return on himself and on his route. It is a work of conceptualizing experience, changing the action knowledge into formalized and recognized learning.

Considering this matter, based on the life story of a person like José Luiz, made wise, reader and writer without the contribution of an official formal education<sup>1</sup>, it becomes clearer to realize how much structured social systems influenced the formation of the subject; in the case of my collaborator, it was through his social practices, especially in the informal aspects of his training that I could find the threads that made of him a *learner throughout his life*, that is, someone who developed autonomy in the pursuit of the learning, once that public policies did not achieve him as a citizen of rights. Despite the ineffectiveness of the government, according to Brandão (1985, p. 7):

No one can escape from education. At home, in the street, in church or at school, in one or in many ways, all of us involve pieces of life with it: to learn, to teach, to teach and learn. To know, to do, to be or to live together, every day we mix up life with education.

It is understood that socialization is an educational process that nurtures the formation of the human being. Therefore, education is everywhere. Networks and social structures of learning transfer from one generation to another are inherent to the evolutionary process of human culture, which leads the human being to transmit and build knowledge, creating social situations that are fundamental to the very maintenance of the species and society formed by it.

In the particular case of someone like José Luiz, I realize that the informal and non-formal aspects of education were the most important in the identity construction, but this happens due to a lack of school service to the childhood by governments. Though we can recognize the intellectual skills developed by him in an almost autodidact<sup>2</sup> way, the lack of schooling produced gaps and problems, some pointed in his narratives, such as the difficulty in writing prose and in reading some classics of Brazilian literature, the possibility of better placement in the job market, the ever-present feeling of inferiority and the fact of referring to himself as *semi-literate*. These are conclusions that confirm the importance of ensuring the current constitutional term to all citizens without exception, the right to quality education at any age.

The historical illiteracy in his family and in the city where José Luiz da Silva was born denounces the reality of a time not yet completely transformed, since there still are a large number of people under the same conditions. According to the National Survey by Household Sampling (PNAD/IBGE)/2013, 13,04 million people who are 15-year-old or older are illiterate in Brazil. This data put on hold the idea of the *right age* to teach literacy, not in the sense of no need to produce meaningful learning to children enrolled in schools, instrumentalizing them with the grasp of reading and writing, but without this discourse serving to hide the millions of Brazilian unreached by educational policies. As Torres alerts (2006), the conception of a certain age for literacy linked to the social convention that this should happen in childhood can carry misconceptions that the society guarantees all children the right to education and that schools ensure the right to learn.

Based on the concept of tessitura networks (Alves, 2008; Oliveira 2008; 2009, among others), I looked after knowing the learning paths of an almost self-taught fellow reader and writer, from some threads detected in the narrator's discourse: reading, social interactions, media and non-formal and *semi-formal* attended courses.

I assumed that there is no single and obligatory path for all people in their learning processes. The ways or meanings are constructed in connection with the interests, beliefs, values and knowledge of the subjects involved in this process. The idea of networking knowledge tessitura gives legitimacy to the “[...] set of knowledge networks, powers and practices present in the daily lives of individuals, but usually expelled from the school environment” (Oliveira, 2008, p. 238). When Oliveira proposes the development of a democratic school, an education committed to the learning of different individuals, he supports the idea that you learn a lot more in social practices and not just at school. I think about an education that is developed throughout life, continuously, a condition inherent to the fact that the development of the person is marked by incompleteness, which puts him in continued training process. Encompassing the acquisition of knowledge, skills, attitudes and values, involving all universes of human experience, learning - how to produce knowledge - is not unique to school systems, but proper of all the spaces and social practices. This way, they incorporate in processes built on networks (Oliveira, 2009) the knowledge acquired from everyday, as *practitioners*, who are open for a long time to the new learning construction.

Contradicting the discourses guided by the modern Western logic that recognizes the formal knowledge as the only genuine, denying the value of all other forms of knowledge, seen as inferior or nonexistent, the network learning tessitura binds all kinds of knowledge – whether it is school/academic or from the everyday life of each person. Therefore, it changes the logic that disqualifies local knowledge about the ways of

being in the world of subordinated cultures, for the benefit of Western people that overvalue scientific knowledge.

Wishing to know the formation process of this ordinary, but singular, person, I tried to recognize the plot that involved him, which wove his subjectivity, covering the intertwined threads, tangles, linked, intercrossed, that constituted the complexity of the story of his life (Morin, 1996).

Wanting to understand the complexity that involved José Luiz's formation, enmeshed in the activities and knowledge produced from the culture in which he was inserted, that is, from the routine that forged his subjectivity, I tried to go beyond the instrumental rationality of modernity, noting the emerging traces in his discourses and practices, in defiance movement to the memories and making visible practices and contexts that helped to understand the man in his individuality, but also to realize pathways common to others that, as well as José Luiz, are now elderly. Thus, I contemplate the possibility of understanding groups not served by public policies of various Republican governments, with emphasis on those introduced since 1929, year when it starts, in particular, the pilgrimage of this man born with the marks of exclusion, without any medical pre or post-birth follow-up, and without, until his adulthood, even a register of birth to become citizen, at least on paper.

According to Oliveira (2008), understanding the logic of *social practices* (Certeau, 2013) is very important so that it can be developed ways to fight for the expansion of democratic actions. In this way, once we try to raise usual practices of the social subjects, we allow what Santos (2002) proposes when discussing the *Sociology of Absences*: expand the present, shortened by the teleological perspective of technical and scientific progress; fight the waste of experiences that succeeded in articulating victims of *exclusive inclusions* (Cury, 2008) in the struggle for survival in underprivileged situations.

José Luiz is a subject who, as many others, had his rights mangled by policies that often aimed to benefit some groups over others. In his discourse emerged actions and practices of denied rights that exposed contradictions operated by educational policies in the Brazilian Republic, mainly during the *Estado Novo* regime, and that continues not reaching the poor in subsequent governments.

### **José Luiz da Silva's Learning Time: his readings**

Examining the networks that formed the protagonist, I emphasize the one I realized as fundamental in the co-author's uniqueness constitution: his *readings*. I reflected on his readings from the study of the produced narratives in the dialogic encounters and not in the direct analysis of his reading objects.



The greatest interest was to know the reactions of Mr. Silva to the readings he conducted throughout life, or at least to those most present in his discourses, from which he seized excerpts and recited them during the interview. I sought to realize to what extent he was not an *intruder* reader in works he read, such as Rui Barbosa, even if the printed text had circulated in places where the author would not imagine when he wrote it. With Ginzburg's help (2006), who studied inquisitorial statements and provided some answers about a reader of the sixteenth century, I was able to meet in part the reaction and/or influence of some texts read by José Luiz, in order to identify aspects of his formation.

The extensive documentation on the case of Domenico Scandella – the Menocchio – allowed Ginzburg (2006) to know the readings, discussions, thoughts and feelings of that ordinary man. His study unraveled, even partially, the culture and the social context in which the Friulian miller molded himself. The historian realized that contact with written culture and reading religious and classic texts, literature not reserved to his social group, were filtered by the oral culture of the time, the sixteenth century. Supported on Mikhail Bakhtin's circularity concept, he expressed the assumption pursued in his text, that "[...] between the culture of the ruling and the subaltern classes existed, in the pre-industrial Europe, a circular relation made of mutual influences, that moved from bottom to top and from top to bottom" (Ginzburg, 2006, p. 12).

The possibility opened by Ginzburg with this work paved the way for research with individuals coming from different social places of those treated by traditional historiography, especially those concerned with the scientific *status* of history. His concept of cultural circularity opened precedent for other penetrations in this dynamic of cultural practice. With this perspective, I sought to know José Luiz's formation process, an ordinary man who, as Menocchio, dared to read classical and religious texts not intended for consumers with his level of education. Unlike the Friuli miller, who had as a filter the readings about the cultural traditions of the field, José Luiz used the Christian doctrine to read books and life itself, although the Christianity also participated in the configuration of Menocchio's thoughts. As in *The Cheese and the Worms*, I realized in his narratives, written and *marginalias* the circularity of erudite and popular culture – under the influence of the rural and urban areas that composed his experiences – with the Christian culture (Catholic) and then, Protestant. It was in those readings and experiences warp that the subjectivities were woven.

Finding the developer's collection literature made me wonder (similar to the Italian historian) to identify in Menocchio's discourses the presence of readings held in adverse contexts: how were these texts read by him? In which ways the time contexts and the religious beliefs influenced the form of capturing these readings?

I can find echoes on the Ginzburg inquiries in Certeau (2013), when he also points out gaps in the study of reading and criticizes the traditional way that the intellectual elite puts the books consumer or of any other product, including the media ones, in receptacles condition, in passive attitude.

One cannot deny the external influences on José Luiz's statements. He is the result of his readings, experiences, religiosity; but he is not limited to mere reflection of these readings or the various ways in which he interacted, since his thinking has an originality of tone, not manifesting himself as a simple result of these influences. The answers given to these provocations were particularly his answers, engendered from his own perception.

This study's intention to understand the singularities in the story of a not educated subject could elucidate, at least in part, the little success of campaigns against illiteracy and the boundaries of young and adults' education when they do not consider their life path and the learning they constituted throughout life. The approach of José Luiz's formation and self-formation process, an elderly nowadays, in revealing his interests, though in advanced age, demonstrated possibilities for the educational proposals aiming to give to these people the right to education.

Darnton (2011, p. 238) assumes that the reading has its history, but he raises the question on how to recover it, "[...] there is no direct way or shortcut, because reading is not a different thing, like a constitution or a social order, which can be traced over time. It is an activity that involves a special relationship – on the one hand the reader, on the other, the text" and they varied greatly in the course of time, according to the social and technological circumstances, as well as interpretive systems.

Darnton (2011, p. 222-223) points out that "[...] we can't find a strategy to understand the internal process by which readers comprise the words", since the cognitive processes differ from culture to culture, from subject to subject. After all, "reading is not just a skill, but a way of establishing meaning, which should vary from culture to culture. It would be strange to expect a formula that could consider all these variations". However, he thinks "it is possible to develop a way to study the changes in the reading of our own culture".

Examples such as Menocchio and Ranson, a trader of the eighteenth-century in France and a middle class reader, infatuated with Rousseau's works, studied by Darnton (2011, p. 206), "[...] suggest that reading and life, the development of texts and life understanding, were more closely related in the early modern period than they are today". To this end, the author proposes an analysis method "[...] comparing reports from readers about their experience with the reading of records on the books and, whenever possible, with their behavior", in order to check his thesis (Darnton, 2011, p. 206).

I tried to understand, as recommended by Darnton, the changes in the internal reading processes by which readers were able to comprehend it. Darnton got closer to Ginzburg when he tried to understand how Menocchio read the texts and also what influenced the ideas that confronted the dominant culture, despite the fact that he marginally circulated in it. I found some possibilities of observing these aspects of reading, not so much on José Luiz's writings, but in his oral reports.

Working with the readings presented in José Luiz's oral discourse, I adopted procedures stressed by Darnton (2011), and looked after answers to the author's questions: *who, what, where and when, whys and hows*. The way Ginzburg peered into Domenico Scandella's discourses served as an inspiration for me to treat José Luiz's discourse, just as well, peering into his readings and influences on his thinking and life ways, because what we think is what we are. Presenting the author of the narrative as a world and texts reader, and an author of his own ideas, I compare him to Scandella, a singular man, representative of the culture in which he was inserted, dialoguing with the hegemonic culture. So, there are differences and similarities that are impossible to be neglected, even because these are different individuals, living in different *time and space* and with numerous peculiarities.

Reflecting on José Luiz's stories, I could understand the reading he made of the written texts, as well as of the world around him and/or the world reading based on his own readings. Polyphony constitutes us and affects the way we interpret what we read, feel and live. It is the readings that we do of others or from others, mediated by what we are, that act on us and are able to affect us and boost the production of other ideas and attitudes.

### ***School Time: a challenge to the not included***

Among Mr. Silva's memories are the ones of his childhood and the *home* school he attended. Since the first meeting, the interviewee said that there were no regular schools in his town, which made him try in distant cities, and also to ask for help from the local priest. However, he did not succeed, even when he appealed to a boarding school in Juazeiro do Norte, since at the time he wanted to become a priest.

Researching about education in Araruna, I discovered registers that in the town it had been founded, since the days of the Empire, the so-called *isolated chairs*<sup>3</sup>, i.e., schools located in the teachers' own houses, who usually did not graduate. This model prevailed in the state of Paraíba, exclusively, until 1916, when the first school group [*grupo escolar*] was built in the state. According to Pinheiro (2002), from that date, the isolated chairs began to be gradually replaced by the new model, seen by politicians and intellectuals with hope in reversing the illiteracy and school evasion in the region, besides stimulating the formation

of a new Republican citizen, prepared to contribute to the nation development and homeland defense.

Between the *age of isolated chairs* and the *age of school groups*, Pinheiro (2002) distinguishes a period of transition, which begins with the creation of the first school group (1916) and extends until 1929, the year José Luiz was born in Araruna. This town already had an *isolated chair* in 1864, and a school group in 1933, the Grupo Escolar Targino Pereira. Both school models coexisted, and through the slow replacing process, emerged the *reunited* or *grouped schools*. Only after 1930 the model of *school groups* prevailed in Paraiba. But Mr. Silva didn't have access to any of the mentioned models. He only attended for a few months to a small private home school in order to be less ignorant, and by his mother's initiative, who sacrificed for this the scarce family resources.

Reaffirming Pinheiro's information, Lucena (2004), a historian from Araruna, describes that, in 1932, during intervener Antenor Navarro's government the Targino Pereira School Group began to be constructed, in honor of Colonel Gino, the mayor Targino Pereira da Costa's father. At the time, this family held the power in the region. Lucena studied in this school as a child.

In the face of scathing evidences, my curiosity led me to ask why the school presence had not been registered in José Luiz's memory. This fact encouraged me to use images of the old school group in our third interview in order to force his memories. To my surprise, not even the captioned images were able to bring records of presence in his mnemonic files. Bosi's reflections (1994, p. 414) helped me to understand this lack of remembrance:

Witnesses that rectified a memory cannot always make us relive it. We listen to a scene story of our past without being able to revive it; one may describe our performance and we feel alien to the narrative. If we miss ourselves among the witnesses, then the memory is not done. Others may make them accurate, but they may also confuse our memories. [...] If an overview is given and we forget our work, we can rebuild it, accept our part in it, but we do not see ourselves in the background of this fogged mirror, we seek for it and it does not reflect our face in return.

Beforehand, I predicted the possible strangeness and even potential conflicts between the selected images and the collaborator's reminiscences, since they were images constructed from third-parties look and selected by me and not by the subject himself. But I took the risk, seeing the possible strangeness as virtuality and not as a barrier to the research. Not identifying himself with the visual presentation in the notebook could enhance other internalized images and, at the same time, help to deconstruct the wrong images mentally built by the interviewer during the dialogues. What most caught the attention of both

participants was the strangeness with the school's image opened in the first half of the 1930s and the architectural images of the city. The images were not related to Mr. Silva's memory records on the place where he lived his childhood and youth. The finding helped me to understand that the name Araruna, found in his identity card, representing his place of origin, and mentioned since the first interview, represented a much wider reality, and that his experiences became alive in the interior of Paraiba, marked by the most severe lack of rights conditions, as was the case of Logradouro, the village where he was born and lived until his migration to the Southeast of Brazil.

As for the not recognized image of the school, the words of the author himself can well translate his deletion or even absence in the mnemonic records: "it must have been the Targinos's children." His expression clearly demonstrates the social differences present in the town, putting the family of local landowners and politicians in privileged conditions of access to services and assets, in, and probably, out of the city. It shows the state of isolation of their village; it establishes the exclusion (Castel, 1997) of the population, regarding the citizenship rights, the lack of information about the possible space available for certain social groups in that educational institution, built to serve the educational needs of individuals from upper levels of the local society. These are facts that explain the seclusion situation in which most of the population lived and still lives.

The Constitution promulgated in 1934 – replaced during the *Estado Novo* implementation – established education as a right to all people and being provided by the family and by the public authorities (Article 140.). But as stated by Cury, Horta and Favero (2001, p. 22-26), this division of responsibilities eventually created loopholes of disengagement by the state, charging the family for the children enrollment, but not guaranteeing placements for everyone.

Still dealing with non-memories, Manguel (2001, p. 27) explains: "We can only see things for which we already have identifiable images, as we can only read a language whose syntax, grammar and vocabulary we already know". The procedure I used allowed a possible move by oral history when working with memories, but exposed the limits of that framework, since the interest in the school groups creation was to mark in the town space, by architecture, the social imaginary. In José Luiz, this desired record was not formed, for reasons explained by the subject himself, and for which I found support in Pollak (1989, p. 12):

If the framework analysis of one's agents and material traces is a key to studying, from top to bottom, as the collective memories are constructed, deconstructed and reconstructed, the reverse procedure, the one that, with the instruments of oral history, part from individual's memories, makes appear the limits of this framework work and at the same time reveals a psychological work of

the individual who tends to control wounds, tensions and contradictions between the official image of the past and personal memories.

From the course he accomplished as an adult in 1969, which gave him a grade school certificate, he saves a few memories. The evening course after work in the south of the city was far for him to go back home. However, in his discourse, when talking about those memories, there is no complaint about the misfortunes faced during the precarious education; although he had already started a family and lived in the Baixada Fluminense area. He kept, from this time, the mnemonic records of the beautiful *diploma* he received at the end, some texts he used in school works and the math classes, the difficulty in following them, since he developed his math logic with the rudiment of the multiplication tables learned in his childhood and in daily practices, or, as he says: *in the school of life*. His experiences during the course resemble those of many adults enrolled in adult education.

The grade school certificate does not qualify to a privileged entry into work market<sup>4</sup>. The urbanization and industrialization processes, especially technology and globalization advances, led to educational access expansion and the need for higher education level for employability. However, the certificate allowed José Luiz to take courses of personal interest such as those offered by a religious institution for preparing leaders.

In his narrative, he lets us realize that his early literacy allowed the achievements present in his life story. His experiences revealed that in the plot of his intellectual construct, the social practices that involved him were fundamental to his constitution as a *learner* and as an ordinary reading practitioner.

### ***School Reminiscence***

There are no written and visual sources guarded by José Luiz that indicate how was the space where he began in the writing culture or materials that were part of the educational process. Therefore, I used the stored memories and instigated, at times, by images of common school objects the materiality of the school and prior periods, since the novelties provided by educational reforms and by industry have always been unsteady, considering the urban and rural areas - material researched by me and presented to the respondent. This exercise practice allowed us to perceive and understand the continuities and forgetting a key time in the human development process; in the case of José Luiz, his first steps in learning to read and write, and the printed marks on his identity.

By the access to texts written by the rapporteur and literature from his personal collection, I searched for traces that indicated the mark and/or absence of schooling in his education. I scanned texts produced

during his adult life and books read by him, observing his impressions in the text and on its margins.

You can detect by analyzing his writings in notebooks and schedule books the difficulty with spatial and sequential organization. I observed texts that do not respect guide lines and margins and, in some cases, break the pages order, including restarting from backwards. This difficulty with the pages sequence is more often in notebooks with wire spiral. However, in single sheets, where he writes poetry, there is a sheltered aesthetics, demonstrating greater familiarity with this kind of writing and with the proper formatting of the poetic text – verses and stanzas. I attribute to this, perhaps, his reading experience of the *cordel* pamphlets, since his adolescence.

The difficulty in the use of notebooks can be associated to the lack of this writing material during the initial education, since his introduction to the written culture was made through the use of lined single sheets and often practiced in wrapping paper, as he often still does to write poems. The lack of experience in using school notebooks may have brought difficulties in later use. The author's discourse confirms: "If I had had the opportunity to study more, I could have improved my writing".

José Luiz believes that the concept of literacy is not just connected to being able to read and write, but also to the fact of studying in an educational institution and to pursue further studies. Consequently, he considers himself as a *semi-literate*.

Despite finding some difficulties to write in bound devices, I noticed relatively few spelling mistakes, considering the various changes of orthographic rules over the years, and somehow, lived by the subject. The constant practice of reading, allowing the contact with written texts, may have contributed to this result, since José Luiz is an avid reader. In his oral discourse, I noticed a few flaws in the concordance.

By analyzing the material provided to the research, I found changes in the use of fonts and ways to spell the words. He writes sometimes in cursive and sometimes with block letters. In addition, there are changes in handwriting, which can be influenced by age and/or by the circumstances in which the text was produced. However, one cannot disregard the method used during his initiation to the writing process.

His first primer was the *Abecedário* or *ABC*. Razzini's text (2008) helps us to think about the changes that occurred in the common objects of school culture. In it there are some testimonies from that period of time, which can also subsidize the study of how was the literacy process in the *small schools* from the interior, as the story of Ananias Pereira de Sousa, born in 1943, and having only attended the first year of a "little school in the countryside", in the interior of Bahia, around 1951. He relates that they first learned the alphabet and only after that they learned how to spell forming syllables, this through the use of uppercase block

letter. There was no writing practice. Dominated this technique, they could pass to the lowercase and then to the handwritten letters.

I realized that this approach was not very different from that used by teacher Teresa Cassiano, responsible for Mr. Silva's literacy process, and that may have influenced the forms of writing, mixing uppercase block letter and cursive, he, who started having more contact with printed text than manuscripts, and not continuing the schooling process.

Also his handwriting may have been influenced by the material used to write, the quill pen, although he said in the first interview that he used the pencil before starting to use the pen.

I observed that when using block letters, there is a bigger incidence of missing letters. In the texts written in cursive, the spelling is almost perfect, although it is possible to see the change of phonemes in words in which the pronunciation and writing differentiate, for example, the exchange of O and U. In the initial education experienced by Mr. Silva, there was no teaching of grammar itself, neither of punctuation and accentuation rules, a fact he recorded in the interview to say that the little known of its uses was due to the practice.

In his notes I found definitions that demonstrate the use of the dictionary to search for some words meanings. This practice may have also helped to clarify some doubts about the words spelling, as well as to understand their meaning and the correct use in context. According to José Luiz, he heard daily sermons of old preachers, which helped him in understanding some concepts and to check the correction of his ideas, at least in his way of understanding the world – much guided by the Protestant religion.

The strong influence of the first instructors in José Luiz's life can be confirmed not only by learning and discourses, which somehow interfered with his identity formation, but by the memory of details of a distant time and not forgetting their names: Tereza Cassiano, his literacy teacher, and Manuel Puloquero, the math teacher, both without specific formation to teach.

It was common in areas with insufficient schools the instruction to be given by people who did not have a diploma; they taught because they were able to read, write and count. That fact is highlighted in historical accounts of education in Brazil, especially in the interior, and is mentioned in government's reports. When Getúlio Vargas spoke on the low school enrollment in rural areas, in 1952, he said: "All this is, in part, a reflection of the lack of adequate school buildings and the lack of qualified teachers, to mention only two important aspects" (INEP, 1987, p. 214).

In Mr. Silva's memories there are some common practices from the place where he studied. He remembers the use of the paddle as a way to reprimand students who committed insubordinate acts, when



they failed doing their works or when they did not know the lesson on the *argumentation day*.

The experiences and educational practices in the school daily routine of teachers and students are still to be better known, as question Schueler and Magaldi (2009, p. 55): “what experiences, stories, memories, scars in bodies and faces were left by the school? What absences, silences, fears, emotions, barriers, exclusion, trauma and feelings experienced those subjects who lived and built the school cultures?” However, works that want to know the socio-cultural representations about the school form of education held by individuals and social groups who remained distant from school are beginning to gain expression. Facing the challenge of entering these fields is a risk, due to the lack of conservation of all the material that would help the researcher. In this work case, the narrative of an aged man contributed to its development. Even not having objects or images of the school culture of a past time, he keeps reminiscences of that time, which I tried to evoke, identifying records stored in his memory.

### **Some Considerations about the Given Meanings to School Time in José Luiz’s Experiences**

When searching for José Luiz’s *school time*, I materialized aspects, in general, little evident to those convinced that the school is a place to teach and learn. I found a reader-writer man and his formation process, traversed by adverse historical contexts, filled of threads that barely crossed the formal schooling. No thread got lost, although woven in ordinary spaces, twisted to readings motivated by José Luiz’s relation with various social spaces – work, family, church, religious and professional leadership courses. These spaces synthesized his relationship with media and nature, awakening his interest in knowledge, allowing his self-training – at first I called him an *autodidact*, but I abandoned the term throughout the investigation, since the knowledge is produced in interaction with many aspects of reality, and not as a simple contemplative and self-reflexive exercise of the individual.

Among the evoked memories of the *private home school*, details and names emerged that go back in distant days of the octogenarian narrator’s life, showing how school time is a period of remarkable experiences in the constitution of everyone who passes by it, for a long or short time, independent of the physical structure, whether it is good or bad.

The study case found that the constitution of this reader and writer was given by socio-historical interactions – which involved social practices – in areas beyond the school, although it is impossible to disregard the school as a way to democratize the process of acquisition of reading and writing.

The approach to the protagonist of the research provided me an opportunity to know part of his training process as a reader and writer of his own texts, despite the little *school* experience. I could see the complex training network that formed him, with threads that have undergone multiple places and times. A large number of threads constituted his networking and self-training and not all were recognized in our long dialogic meetings, since there are threads that constitute us that we can't identify.

The experience acquired from this research showed how the formation of an individual is complex and becomes even more complex in the context of technological and globalized society, focused in writing and spelling (*graphocentric*). Despite his self-learning, revealed in many aspects of his self-training, I concluded that the school, as an educator agency, can provide important threads to the fabric of this plot, and also that its non presence in the citizens' lives leaves many loopholes for those who are part of a writing culture society.

Observing subjects like José Luiz, a man who constituted himself as a reader and writer and *graduated from life*, even though not being part of any educational policy that could have provided him a more complete education in the academic sense – although it strengthens the sense of being subject of himself, of being a person that was woven with threads very distant from a school space – gives them a certain dignity, but it is not enough. They were able to *learn* in life, in the world and dared to trace their own knowledge adventure, exploring wisdom of a historically produced culture, but it doesn't exempt the state and the society of the responsibility, just by the fact that they are citizens.

In José Luiz's case, the *non right* created some limitations that he could not overcome, as the desired fluency in writing, something that could enable him to fulfill the wish for a biography of his own story. With a low social recognition – a situation commonly experienced by victims of prejudice of a traditionally euro centered society and marked by what Santos (2007) refers to as *abyssal* thinking – he experiences the popular knowledge discrimination and also the intolerance to what is made out of Western scientific standards or philosophical logic. Along with this contempt to popular knowledge, we can recognize what the overvaluation of degrees means in a society that is educated, competitive and, for Brazil, a country that inherited a colonial tradition that exchanges the legitimized power by noble, academics and/or property titles. In this context, *intellectual* subjects without schooling and academic degrees are usually broken down, if not misunderstood, even when reproducing knowledge guided by modern science.

The work dealt with a subjectivized reality, naming the subject and making his experiences known, turning them into a mirror in which you can not only find virtues and flaws. The main objective was to make life stories like this known by those occupying positions of power in the

society. Make them know and realize the virtues and difficulties of the path, reflect and create alternatives that minimize, at least, the facts that promote exclusion. It is impossible to disregard the importance of *school time* in childhood to the formation of individuals, but it is also necessary to be aware of the need to promote a *school time* at all stages of the contemporary citizen's life, given the new realities that time imposes to each one, above all, to ensure that time in the lives of those that never had access.

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## Notes

- 1 Even considered the fact that he attended and have been certified as one who the finished elementary school in a mixed grade class at the age of 39/40 years old, because legally speaking these classes were not classified as regular education.
- 2 I avoid the term autodidact as I consider that knowledge is constructed in interaction with others, whether physically present or not. Also because the reading of a text is, in a way, an interaction between the author of the text, that is heard, and the reader, who makes contact with the author's ideas, in terms perhaps more favorable with respect to retort, but with few possibilities of feedback to placements and questions.
- 3 For Pinheiro (2002, p 72), the *isolated chairs* implementation was an attempt to create a secular public school structure by the principles of the Enlightenment, but also influenced by scholasticism, philosophic trend brought from Western Europe. At first, the isolated chairs worked in the teachers own houses. They operated as a *school house*: visiting rooms in private houses, halls located in mills of the big houses and farm porch. An enjoyable situation for the authorities that didn't see as being fair for the Public Treasury to have expenses with houses to teach the first letters.
- 4 The concept used by Dubet (2003, p. 32) to study the Republican education in France: the scholar Malthusianism helps to understand in part the combination of school and social exclusion in Brazil. According to the author, it was the Malthusianism school that "protected for a long time from the process of making of the school an exclusion factor. [...] Until the early 70s, the diplomas were produced in less than or equal to the amount of skilled jobs to which they corresponded to". The author states that no one accused the school of being responsible for unemployment decades ago.

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